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DE RUEHQT #2082 2292249  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5072  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE 5886  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 0867  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ AUG 0020  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE 3634  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 1944  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 0627  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL IMMEDIATE 0994  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

UNCLAS QUITO 002082

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEW COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS ECUADOR

REF: QUITO 01910

¶1. (U) Summary: Colombian Foreign Minister Maria Araujo made her first official visit to Ecuador on August 16. In meetings with Foreign Minister Francisco Carrion and Vice President Alejandro Serrano she discussed the need for safeguarding bilateral relations in the face of problems along the common border, reaffirmed Colombia's commitment to maintain suspension of aerial fumigations along the sensitive border region, reinforced the need to cooperate in the fight against international crime, and with Carrion agreed to encourage greater cooperation between the Colombian and Ecuadorian militaries on border security issues. The visit was well received and will likely help further bilateral relations. A border development agreement is set for signing on September 7. End Summary.

Carrion-Araujo Meeting Positive  
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¶2. (U) In her first official visit to Ecuador since assuming the top Colombian diplomatic spot, Foreign Minister Maria Araujo on August 16 met with Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Francisco Carrion and later paid a courtesy call on Vice President Alejandro Serrano. Araujo told the press that Plan Colombia is a very important tool in the international fight against narcotrafficking, but said that it should not be an obstacle to positive Ecuador-Colombia bilateral relations. She also reaffirmed Colombia's commitment to maintain temporary suspension of aerial fumigations within 10 kilometers of the Ecuadorian border.

¶3. (U) Araujo agreed to push forward efforts to repatriate Colombian refugees resident in Ecuador. Addressing the Victor Enriquez shooting (reftel), she said that the case is being investigated by the Ipiales Prosecutor's office. Both ministers agreed that greater military cooperation was needed to guarantee the security of residents living in the troubled border region. The ministers also agreed to sign the Binational Plan for Border Zone Integration on September 7-8 near the Rumichaca border crossing point in Tulcan, Carchi.

Carrion Stresses GOE Position  
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¶4. (U) In a joint press conference after their meeting, Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Francisco Carrion reaffirmed Ecuador's non-intervention policy with respect to Colombia's internal conflict. He emphatically pointed out that Ecuador does not consider the Manta Forward Operating Location (FOL)

to be part of Plan Colombia, a bilateral agreement involving only the U.S. and Colombia. The FOL's location in Ecuador represents Ecuador's contribution to the international fight against narcotrafficking, Carrion said.

Araujo Departs; Bilats Continue  
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15. (U) The Ecuador-Colombia Binational Commission convened on August 17 in Quito following the August 16 ministerial. The Ecuadorian MFA confirmed that the meeting will focus on resolving a pending border demarcation issue in Cerro Troya, Carchi.

Comment  
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16. (SBU) Carrion's efforts to smooth relations with Colombia by increasing bilateral communication mechanisms for border issues and focusing the overall relationship on a wider range of bilateral issues has helped the two countries build a more solid bilateral foundation and this visit cemented those improved ties in a very public way. Press coverage of Araujo's visit was very positive here, highlighting goodwill on both sides. Bilateral communication between civil and military officials on development and security issues is improving. Araujo made a positive debut in Ecuador and demonstrated a good understanding of the sensitivities in the relationship. Her prospects for deepening bilateral ties begun under her predecessor appear good.

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